Database Basics:

An introduction to Windows, Mac and web databases

Introduction

Are you and your organization ready to become more organized, more productive, and better able to share information?

If so, you are ready for an easy to use database.

What is a database?

You are, no doubt, familiar with applications that have database-like functions, such as address book, iTunes, calendar, photo management programs, and so on. While extremely useful, these programs perform a limited number of functions and hold a limited amount of information. In contrast, databases can hold whatever information you need and you can view your data any way you like.

You probably have information scattered about, in spreadsheets, on word processor documents, on paper and post-it notes. A database helps you bring all this information together so you (and your team) can become more organized and productive.

With a database, you can easily collect and organize all your information in one place. Databases can store all types of information – contacts, product information, graphics, projects, invoices, and just about anything you need to keep track of. Generally, people start creating lists in spreadsheets or in word-processing programs.

Data and lists developed and stored on spreadsheets, and word processor documents quickly become hard to manage, organize, and sort.

As the list grows it becomes harder and harder to manage, organize, and sort the information. The information quickly becomes hard to track or understand in this type of list form, and there are limited ways to search or share the information. This is when a database becomes a necessary tool.

Think of a database as a big stack of cards with several bits of information on each card. All sorts of information can be put on those cards – text, numbers, dates, images, and web links. The cards are then organized into lists or tables. You can store lists of customers, projects you are working on, and items or images you want to organize.

All types of data can be stored and organized in a database

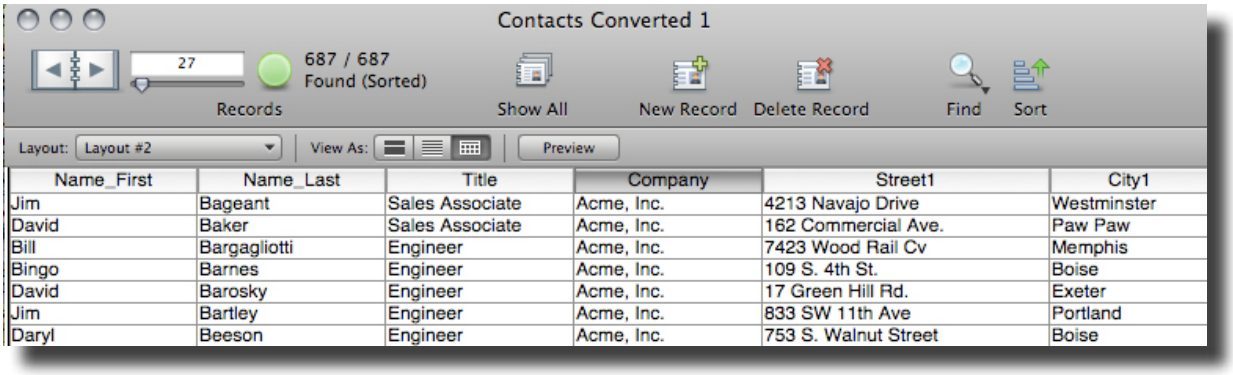
Advantages of a database

Why would you want to put information into a database instead of, say, a spreadsheet or a document? Databases are far better at finding and sorting information. You can quickly search a database to answer questions such as "how many people registered for an event" or "which customer purchased which product" and get an immediate answer.

Get the full Detail

Databases organize your information in lists (like spreadsheets) but, unlike spreadsheets, you can also view your information as forms. A form can look like a paper form or can be designed as an online form. Forms provide a great way to get at all the details. View all your projects in a list, and with a click see the details on a particular project in a form view. Forms can also make data entry easier.

Database in List View



Name_First	Name_Last	Title	Company	Street1	City1
Jim	Bageant	Sales Associate	Acme, Inc.	4213 Navajo Drive	Westminster
David	Baker	Sales Associate	Acme, Inc.	162 Commercial Ave.	Paw Paw
Bill	Bargagliotti	Engineer	Acme, Inc.	7423 Wood Rail Cv	Memphis
Bingo	Barnes	Engineer	Acme, Inc.	109 S. 4th St.	Boise
David	Barosky	Engineer	Acme, Inc.	17 Green Hill Rd.	Exeter
Jim	Bartley	Engineer	Acme, Inc.	833 SW 11th Ave	Portland
Daryl	Beeson	Engineer	Acme, Inc.	753 S. Walnut Street	Boise

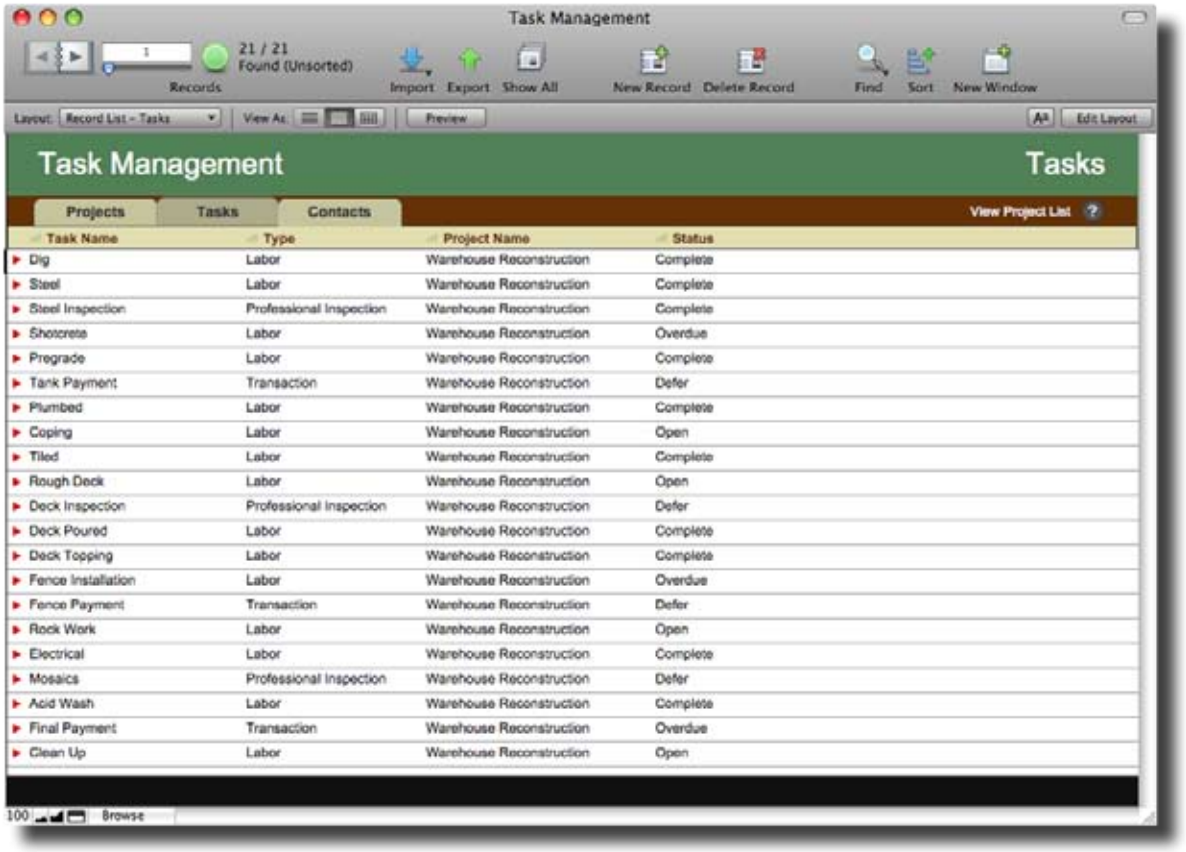
Each category or tab can be searched, sorted or reordered with a single mouse click.

Same Database in Form View

By switching to form view, you can get more details on each entry or subject

Collaborate on projects

Databases also work to keep your information accurate and up to date. Attractive pop-up lists, auto-complete fields, and other features make data entry fast and consistent. Full-featured databases (such as FileMaker Pro) enable multiple people to open and use the same database at the same time. Security features allow you to limit access to information to only those who need to know. By having information stored in a shared database, teams can access and update records from one source enabling version control and data accuracy versus sharing and replacing spreadsheets.

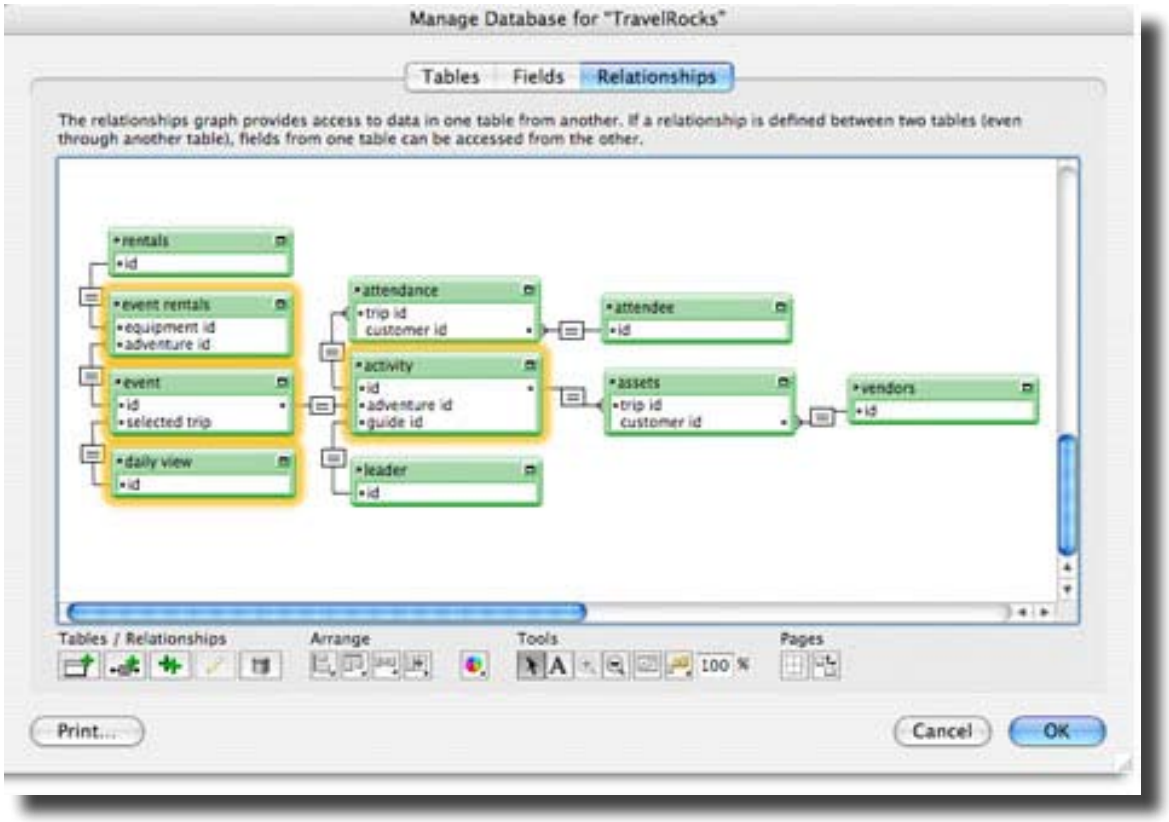


Use a database to collaborate on projects where all the details can be shared and updated by the team from one source.

Link Information together

Create a database to connect your information together. You might have a list of customers, and a list of items you have sold. By connecting (or "relating") these lists you will see all the items a particular customer purchased. Then link database records

with files, photos, movies, and even web pages to organize everything in a single database. Try doing that with a spreadsheet!



Link information together to get the full picture of all your data from one place

Create and share reports

Databases are very handy for creating reports. Get the most out of your information with easy-to-use database reporting tools. Track sales performance, publish key metrics, or create ad-hoc reports in just a few clicks. By being able to compile your information into one source, you can quickly develop different types of reports that you need by simply selecting a pre-defined layout, choosing the fields you want included, and then organizing how you want to show or view that data. When you want to share your reports with others, you can publish them in popular formats such as Microsoft® Excel or Adobe® Acrobat.

You can also gather and report on data from other applications by creating database reports with information from back-end systems such as Microsoft® SQL Server, Oracle, or MySQL, or from custom applications such as inventory solutions, or accounting programs. With your desktop database program and no programming skills, you can create reports from your corporate data warehouse or SQL-based e-commerce system, or import customer order information from your corporate Oracle database system to generate weekly sales reports.

Create and publish all types of reports from a database

If you want to create formal mailings or reports, you can use your database to quickly create labels, envelopes and form letters from your information. This is great for email newsletters, news updates and more. You can include information specific to the recipient for added personalization. Choose from templates for pre-defined labels for shipping, mailing, inventory and more or select from common envelope formats.

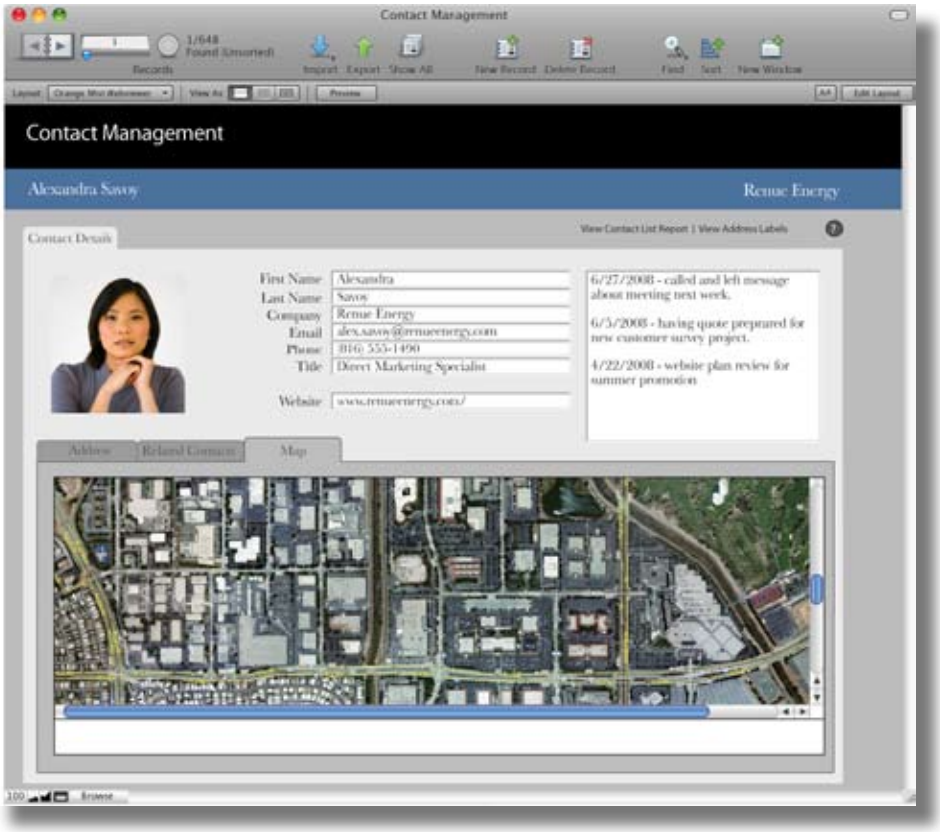
Keep in touch with customers through your database

Leverage the power of the Internet

Todays databases move beyond the desktop and allow you to harness the information on the web. You can extend your database to publish basic web forms, status and lists, or get live web data delivered directly into your database based on your information. With web access, you can track products and projects directly within your database which can be linked directly to manufacturers' web pages, product documentation and specs, search engine price comparisons, shipment tracking, product images, order invoices, and more.

Keep in touch with your customers and design forms for the web within your database, and then publish them to the web for event sign-ups, customer feedback, service requests, surveys and more. Capture their information and have it stored automatically in your database which you can then run reports on.

Or, use your database and the web to provide status updates such as when a task has completed or an item has shipped, and deliver lists such as an up-to-date schedule or a checklist for a planned project – even include security privileges for your clients or co-workers to limit access to the information.



Link live information on the web directly to your data

Next Steps

As you've learned, databases do more than hold data. They help you solve problems, answer questions, and make decisions. You can create formulas and calculations to help you analyze information, then whip together quick reports to help you share your insights. Databases offer an endless source of possible ways to manage and use your data, and today's databases make it easy to do so. For more information on the ways you can put a database to work for you today, visit www.filemaker.com.

Additional Resources

Congratulations! You've taken the first step toward managing people, projects, assets and more - the easy way!

You might be interested in the free resources available on the FileMaker websites (www.filemaker.com and www.filemakertrial.com). These free resources include:

- Free trial versions of FileMaker database software
- Pre-designed, ready-to-use database solutions for common everyday information management needs.
- Webinars and videos which show you how to use FileMaker databases for managing data and projects.
- Customer stories so you can read how others from around the world use FileMaker Pro databases to manage their information better.

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